

Esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Jennifer Purdon and I am a medical cannabis educator at Canna Care Docs in Hartford, the former president of UConn Students for Sensible Drug Policy, and a researcher in the Culture and Mental Health Disparities (CMHD) psychology lab at UConn. As a cannabis health care provider, activist, researcher, and medical patient myself, I understand the medicinal benefits of cannabis first-hand, but I'm also aware of the immense harm that has been imparted on marginalized communities because of cannabis prohibition and the 'War on Drugs', which is actually a war on people who use drugs. I am here today in support of SB 1085 in favor of the equitable and accessible legalization of cannabis in CT. I ask that the members of the judiciary committee consider the impact that cannabis prohibition is having on students, patients, and marginalized communities. When cannabis is legalized, it is imperative that inclusion in legal cannabis be prioritized for the black and brown people who have been incarcerated and disproportionately harmed by prohibition. The drug war began with the intention of incarcerating people of color, breaking up their communities, and vilifying them, and there will be no justice or equity unless all of those who have been incarcerated are released from jail and their convictions erased. I hope that with cannabis legalization, the state will also provide business trainings, lawyers, decrease licensing costs, and provide consistent support to people of color who are entering the cannabis industry, so that access will be truly actualized.

In solidarity with incredible activists like Jason Ortiz and Kebra Bolden, who are tirelessly working to bring equity into cannabis in Connecticut, I ask you to review the details of the organization CureCT's 10 elements of equitable cannabis policy. I will highlight some but not all of these elements herein:

- Release all prisoners and the expungement of criminal records
- Dismiss all pending cannabis charges including for those on probation and parole
- Tax incentives for businesses to hire ex-offenders
- Diversity requirements within the licensing process and reporting on diversity statistics
- Tie investment dollars to arrest rates so that the communities who have been damaged the most will receive the most aid
- Access to college should not be impeded by cannabis related offenses or infractions
- Water/runoff protections, use of recyclable plastics for packaging
- Distribute cannabis revenue to communities most impacted by the war on drugs
- Ensure opportunities in the new cannabis community are owned and operated by individuals from over-policed communities.

Lastly, I hope that the committee will revise the bill to include cultivation of a small amount of cannabis plants, and will consider revisions for growing rights for medical patients as well. Thank you for your time, and for listening to my testimony.

Jennifer Purdon  
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